Charlotte Mason's House of Education,
Scale How, Ambleside, UK, 2009

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Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada

Conseil de recherches en sciences humaines du Canada

TUESDAY, 5 *p.m.*, Downshire House.

Sir Vincent Kennett Barrington in the chair.

Miss Mason lectured on "Ethical Teaching in the P.N.E.U." It is to be regretted that the report of the lecture, of the discussion, and of the Chairman's remarks, is too imperfect for publication.

WEDNESDAY MORNING, *May 26th.*

At London House.

A. T. Schofield, Esq., M.D., in the chair.

The Chairman: I will ask Miss Mason to read her paper. Those of you who were present yesterday afternoon at Downshire House will remember that Miss Mason's paper then was on "Ethics," and this, this morning, is in some respects a continuation of the same line of thought.

Miss Mason read the following paper on "Teaching in the Branches," taking the *Moral* side:—

The Committee have done me the honour to ask me to indicate to the secretaries and representatives definite lines upon which the special teaching of the P.N.E.U. may be carried out in their several Branches. A little girl I know once had her friend's doll to spend the night with her. She was asked in the morning if she had enjoyed Rosie's company. "I hated the responsibility of the child," was her answer, and I leave you to apply the moral.

We, the members of the P.N.E.U., are a body united, not merely to set certain educational agencies in motion and to hear, discuss and profit by the views of those who have thought upon educational subjects; these things we do and realise the importance of doing, but we have a further *raison d'être* as a society. Our business is to advance a certain school of educational thought to which we have, more or less, given in our adhesion, and perhaps I am right in saying that

one object of the present Conference is to help us to define to ourselves more clearly some of these principles, and to consider how they may be carried out in detail in the work of the several Branches.

One part of the work of the Conference is to consider P.N.E.U. teaching—religious and moral, intellectual and physical. P.N.E.U. teaching does not mean that we hold peculiar views on the subjects of religion and morals, culture and hygiene, but that we do hold very definite views as to how children should be trained and taught in each of these, let us say, subjects. Now three principles which underlie P.N.E.U. thought and the furtherance of which some of us have deeply at heart, are:—(*a*) The recognition of authority as a fundamental principle, as universal and as inevitable in the moral world as is that of gravitation in the physical; (*b*) The recognition of the physical basis of habits and of the important part which the formation of habits plays in education; (*c*) The recognition of the vital character and inspiring power of ideas. How these three principles may be applied in arranging the lectures, classes, readings, etc., for each branch will afford us matter for useful consideration, and may help in the practical working of the branches.

In the first place I should like to remark that it is a mistake for any human being, and especially for a branch secretary, to be content with what he can get! He who aims at getting what he wants is pretty sure to be successful. The very thing you want is there, somewhere, most likely in your close neighbourhood. Go about with a diviner's rod, point to the right spot, and lo! out springs the water; in other words, determine to have a lecture on a certain subject, think of the people in your neighbourhood whose thoughts are likely to have turned in that direction, ask for a lecture with a given title, and most likely you will get it. It should not be forgotten that one of the objects of the Union is to draw forth the educational thought of workers and thinkers who would not otherwise give expression to the lessons of wisdom which life and reflection have brought to them. England is fabulously rich in such thinkers, every neighbourhood has them; only the diviner's rod is wanted, and no doubt every secretary walks about, wand in hand, ready to point to the right person. In this way we shall greatly enrich the common stock of educational thought, and lectures that have been unearthed from unexpected sources often prove to be amongst the most original and valuable to the Union. To-day it is our business to consider how the three principles I have indicated may be brought to bear on the work of a branch as regards (*a*) and (*b*) religious and (*c*) moral education.

Let us consider now whether there are any principles to guide us as to the moral teaching which the Branches are advised to secure. It is probably rather perplexing to secretaries to be told on their leaflet that each session should show one or more lectures on the moral aspect of education, and, as a matter of fact, these ethical lectures are often conspicuous by their absence. Possibly, if the secretaries had clear ideas as to what was intended, they might think it well to secure more definite teaching on a subject the importance of which is constantly present to all our minds. I will not enter on the psychological questions which underlie this subject, though these offer hints for many suggestive and illuminating lectures. I shall follow the three P.N.E.U. principles which we are illustrating.

First let us consider the principle of authority, which is the basis of moral as it is of religious teaching. "Ought" is part of the verb "to owe," and that which we owe is a personal debt to a Lawgiver and Ruler, however men name the final authority. If they choose to speak of Buddha or Humanity, they do not escape from the sense of a moral authority. They know that that which they *ought* is that which they *owe* to do, a debt to some power or personality external to themselves. God has made us so, that, however much we may be in the dark as to the divine Name we can never for a minute escape from the sense of "Ought," the law, which becomes flesh-torturing and spirit-quelling in proportion as we are removed from the light of Revelation. To us, who know the name of God and have the revelation of the Scriptures, authority is no vague terror. We know what is required of us, and that the requirements are never arbitrary, but necessary in the nature of things, both for the moral government of the world and to gratify the unquenchable desire of every human soul to rise into a higher state of being. Perhaps parents, great as they are and should be in the eyes of their children,

should always keep well to the front the fact that their authority is derived. "God does not allow" us to do thus and thus should be a rarely expressed but often present thought to parents who study the nature of the divine authority where it is most fully revealed, that is, in the Gospels. They see there that authority works by principles and not by rules, and as they themselves are the deputy authorities set over every household, it becomes them to consider the divine method of government. They should discern the signs of the times too; the tendency is to think that a man can only act according to his "lights," and, therefore, that it is right for him to do that which is right in his own eyes; in other words, that every man is his own final authority in questions of right and wrong. It is extremely important that parents should keep in view, and counteract if need be, the tendencies of the day.

On the other hand, it is well that they should understand the limitations of authority. Even the divine authority does not compel. It indicates the way and protects the wayfarer and strengthens and directs self-compelling power. It permits a man to make free choice of obedience rather than compels him to obey. In the moral training of children arbitrary action almost always produces revolt. Parents believe that they are doing well to *rule* their households, without considering the pattern, the principles, and the limitations of parental authority.

An American writer on the moral instruction of children states that "it is the business of the moral instructor in the school to deliver to his pupils the subject-matter of morality, but not to deal with the sanctions of it; to give his pupils a clearer understanding of what *is* right and what *is* wrong, but not to enter into the question why the right should be done and the wrong avoided. For example, let us suppose that the teacher is treating of veracity. He says to the pupil, 'Thou shalt not lie.' He takes it for granted that the pupil feels the force of this commandment, and acknowledges that he ought to yield obedience to it. For my part I should suspect of quibbling and dishonest intention any boy or girl who would ask me, 'Why ought I not to lie?' I should hold up before such a child the 'ought' in all its awful majesty." Here we have a contention at least two thousand years old. Socrates combated it as expressed in the formulæ:—"Man is the measure of all things"; "Just as each thing appears to each man, so it is to him"; "All truth is relative." We say to-day that a man can but live up to his "lights"; in other words, there is no authority, no truth and no law beyond what every man carries in his own bosom. The necessary issue of this teaching is the doctrine of the unknowable God. The God Who, if He exists, does not exist for us, because we have no relations with Him. It is in their early years at home that children should be taught to realise that duty can exist only as that which we *owe* to God; that the law of God is exceeding broad and encompasses them as the air they breathe, only more so, for it reaches to their secret thoughts; and this is not a hardship but a delight. That mothers should love their little children and make them happy all day long—this is part of the law of God: that children are glad when they are good, and sad when they are naughty—this, too, is the law of God: that, if Tommy drops his spoon it falls to the ground, is a law of God too of a different kind. A mother cannot give her children a better inheritance than the constant sense of being ruled and encompassed by law, and that law is another name for the will of God.

No doubt every child is born with a conscience, *i.e.*, with a sense that he ought to choose the right and refuse the wrong; but he is not born with the power to discern good and evil. An educated conscience is a far rarer possession than we imagine, though no doubt we are all startled now and then by the laxities of right-minded neighbours in matters the right and wrong of which is patent to ourselves; probably our own moral eccentricities are equally startling to our friends. The blame rests on our faulty moral education, which has hardly made us aware of fallacious thought and insincere speech; we believe that Latin and Greek must be taught but that morals come by nature. A certain rough-and-ready kind of morality, varying with our conditions, does come by heredity and environment; but that most delicate and beautiful of human possessions, an educated conscience, comes only by teaching with authority and adorning by example. It is curious how educated people are still at sea as regards the moral status of children. Some time ago I was present at an interesting discussion, by the members of an educational society, on the subject of children's lies. It was interesting to notice that the meeting, consisting of able, educated people, divided itself into those who held that children were born true and those who held that they were born false; it occurred to nobody to recall his own childhood or even to reflect on his own condition at the present moment. The question lay between children being born moral and born immoral. Nobody reflected that every human being comes into the world with infinite possibilities for good; and, alas, infinite possibilities for evil; possibly with evil hereditary tendencies which may be rectified by education; or with good tendencies, which, alas, his bringing up may nullify.

We need go no further than the ten commandments and our Lord's exposition of the moral law to find corrective teaching for the spasmodic, impulsive moral efforts which tend to make up our notion of what the children call "being good," and nowhere shall we find a more lucid and practical commentary on the moral law than is set forth in the Church Catechism. It was the practice of a venerable Father of the church, Bishop Ken, to recite the "duty towards God," and the "duty towards my neighbour" every day. It is a practice worth imitating and it would not be amiss to let all children of whatever communion learn these short abstracts of the whole duty of man. Bishop Butler's *Sermons* (to be had published in Cassell's 3*d.* Library) are very helpful and suggestive; and for more modern teaching, Canon Eyton's *Sermons on the Ten Commandments*, and Professor Knights' *Christian Ethics* would be found suggestive and stimulating. I mention only works which approach the subject of morality from the stand-point of authority.

Lectures illustrating this view of duty might be given on, for example, Wordsworth's *Ode to Duty*:—

> "Stern lawgiver! yet thou dost wear
> The Godhead's most benignant grace;
> Nor know we anything so fair
> As is the smile upon thy face;
> Flowers laugh before thee on their beds;
> And fragrance in thy footing treads;
> Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong;
> And the most ancient heavens, through thee, are fresh and strong."

Or on Matthew Arnold's lines on *Rugby Chapel*—

> "Servants of God!—or sons
> Shall I not call you? because
> Not as servants ye knew
> Your Father's innermost mind,
> His, who unwillingly sees
> One of His little ones lost—
> Yours is the praise, if mankind
> Hath not as yet in its march
> Fainted, and fallen, and died!"

Or on this again of Tennyson—

> "Not once or twice in our fair island story
> The path of duty was the way to glory:
> He, that ever following her commands,
> On with toil of heart and knees and hands,
> Thro' the long gorge to the far light, has won
> His path upward and prevail'd,—
> Shall find the toppling crags of duty, scaled,
> Are close upon the shining table-lands
> To which our God Himself is moon and sun."

Or on Matthew Arnold's *Morality*—

> How "Tasks in hours of insight willed
> Can be through hours of gloom fulfilled."

Possibly we could hardly do better in the way of lectures on this branch of our subject, than to get thoughtful disquisitions on some high poetic teaching, adding love to law and devotion to duty, so that children shall know themselves, by duty as by prayer,

> "Bound by gold chains about the feet of God."

In the matter of the Ideas that inspire the virtuous life, we miss much by our *laissez-aller* way of taking things for granted. When I was a child I used to read a little leather-bound volume full of moral aphorisms, from the Greek and Latin classics, translated in beautiful flowing English, and I remember that these fine rolling sentences full of matter made a great impression on me; and one can understand that the Greek or Roman boy brought up on this strong meat, developed virtues in which we are a little slack. But in these days we do not use this form of moral teaching for our children.

The mediæval Church preserved these classical traditions. It endeavoured to answer the Socratic enquiry—"What ought we to do and what do we mean by the words 'ought' and 'doing' or 'acting?'" and it answered, as far as might be, by way of object lessons, visible signs of spiritual things signified. In the Arena Chapel at Padua, we have Giotto's Faith and Infidelity, Love and Envy, Charity and Avarice, Justice and Injustice, Temperance and Gluttony, Hope and Despair, pictured forth in unmistakeable characters for the reading of the unlearned and ignorant. We have the same theme, treated with a difference, in what Mr. Ruskin calls the "Bible of Amiens," where Humility and Pride, Temperance and Gluttony, Chastity and Lust, Charity and Avarice, Hope and Despair, Faith and Idolatry, Perseverance and Atheism, Love and Discord, Obedience and Rebellion, Courage and Cowardice, Patience and Anger, Gentleness and Churlishness,—in pairs of quatre-foils, an upper and a lower, under the feet of each Apostle, who was held to personify the special virtue. But *we* know nothing about cardinal virtues and deadly sins. We have no teaching by authoritative utterance strong in the majesty of virtue. We work out no schemes of ethical teaching in marble, we paint no scale of virtues on our walls, and no repellent vices. Our poets speak for us it is true; but the moral aphorisms, set like jewels though they be on the forefinger of time, are scattered here and there, and we leave it serenely to happy chance whether our children shall or shall not light upon the couple of lines which should fire them with the impulse to virtuous living. It may be said that we neglect all additional ethical teaching because we have the Bible; but how far and *how* do we use it? Here we have indeed the most perfect ethical system, the most inspiring and heart-enthralling, that the world has ever possessed; but, alas, it is questionable whether we attempt to set a noble child's heart beating with the thought that he is required to be perfect as his Father which is in Heaven is perfect.

It is time we set ourselves seriously to this work of moral education which is to be done, most of all, by presenting the children with high ideals. "Lives of great men all remind us we can make our lives sublime," and the study of the lives of great men and of the great moments in the lives of smaller men is most wonderfully inspiring to children, especially when they perceive the strenuousness of the childhood out of which a noble manhood has evolved itself. As one grows older no truth strikes one more than that "the child is father to the man." It is amazing how many people of one's own acquaintance have fulfilled the dreams of their childhood and early youth, and have had their days indeed "bound each to each in natural piety." The Bible is, of course, a storehouse of most inspiring biographies. It would be well, however, if we could manage our teaching so as to bring out in each character the master thought of all his thinking. The Queen has done this with singular tact and power in the Albert Memorial Chapel, where, as we know, Prophets and Patriarchs are presented each for that special virtue or form of endeavour which seems to her the keynote of his character. This is a happy effort to survive the mediæval object teaching of which I have already spoken. The same thing occurs again in the School of Song of the Edinburgh Cathedral, where Mrs. Traquair has frescoed the walls to illustrate the *Benedicite*, where "holy and humble men of heart," for example, is illustrated by three men of our own day of different schools of thought—Cardinal Newman is the only one I recollect. The force of this kind of master idea, and the unity it gives to life, cannot be better illustrated than by the "I will be good" of our own beloved Queen. There are few children in the kingdom whose hearts have not thrilled to the phrase. Perhaps Her Majesty will one day know how much she has done to give moral impulse to her great Empire by that simple child-like promise so abundantly fulfilled.

Next in value to biographies from the point of view of inspiration are the burning words of the poets,—Tennyson's *Ode to the Iron Duke*, for example. Perhaps no poet has done more to stir the fire of patriotism amongst us than Mr. Rudyard Kipling:—"We learn from our wistful mother to call Old England 'home,'" opens the door to a flood of patriotic feeling, as indeed do the whole of the poems, *The Native-born*, and *The Flag of England*:—

> "Never was Isle so little,
> Never were seas so lone,
> But over the scud and the palm trees
> The English flag has flown."

From another point of view how this makes the heart quick with patriotic emotions:—

> "Buy my English posies,
> Kent and Surrey may,
> Violets of the undercliff
> Wet with channel spray,
> Cowslips of the Devon combe,
> Midland furze afire;
> Buy my English posies
> And I'll sell you heart's desire."

In the reading of the Bible, of poetry, of the best prose, the culling of mottoes is a delightful and most stimulating occupation, especially if a motto book be kept, perhaps under headings, perhaps not. It would not be a bad idea for children to make their own year-book with a motto for every day in the year culled from their own reading. What an incentive to a good day it would be to read in the morning as a motto of our very own choice and selection and not the voice of an outside mentor:—"Keep ye the law; be swift in all obedience!" Our theme suggests endless subjects for lectures, and what is more, lectures within the power of any earnest-minded person of literary tastes; for example, (1) lives with a keynote; (2) Bible heroes; (3) Greek heroes; (4) poems of moral inspiration; (5) poems of patriotism, duty, or any single moral quality; (6) moral object lessons; (7) mottoes and where to find them, etc.

Moral Habits, the way to form them and the bounden duty of every parent to send children into the world with a good outfit of moral habits, is a subject so much to the front in our thoughts, that I will not dwell upon it to-day. The moral impulse having been given by means of some such inspiring idea as we have considered, the parent's next business is to keep the idea well to the front, with tact and delicacy and without insistence, and to afford apparently casual opportunities for moral effort on the lines of the first impulse. Again, let us keep well before the children that it is the manner of thoughts we think which matter; and, in the early days, when a child's face is an open book to his parents, the habit of sweet thought must be kept up, and every selfish, resentful, unamiable movement of children's minds observed in the countenance and changed before consciousness sets in.

One more point: parents should take pains to have their own thoughts clear as to the manner of virtues they want their children to develop. Candour, fortitude, temperance, patience, meekness, courage, generosity, indeed the whole rôle of the virtues, would be stimulating subjects for lectures, with ample illustrations and critical examination of the subjects. One caution we should like to offer. A child's whole notion of religion is "being good." It is well that he should know that being good is not his whole duty to God, although it is so much of it, that the relationship of love and personal service, which they owe as children to their Father, as subjects to their King, are even more than the "being good" which gives our Almighty Father such pleasure in His children.

Here followed a momentary pause, after which Miss Mason read the following paper on "Religious Education in the P.N.E.U.":—

I should like before reading the paper on Religious Education to say that there is not the slighest pretence that it is exhaustive. My treatment has for its object the indication of practical lines for religious education, and I very earnestly hope that you will find I have left out things I ought to have said, or said things I ought not to have said.

Let us first consider how the principle of authority bears on religious teaching. The sense of duty, more or less illuminated, or more or less benighted, is always relative to an authority with whom it rests to say "thou shalt" or "thou shalt not." It is brought home, too, to most of us who are set in authority, that we ourselves are acting under a higher, and finally, under the highest authority. A child cannot have a lasting sense of duty until he is brought into contact with a supreme Authority, Who is the source of law, and the pleasing of Whom converts duty into joy. In these rather latitudinarian days, there is perhaps no part of religious teaching more important than to train children in the sense of the immediate presence and continual going-forth of the supreme Authority. "Thou art about my path and about my bed and spiest out all my ways," should be a thought, not of fear, but of very great comfort to every child. This constant recognition of authority excites the twofold response of docility and of reverence. It is said that the

children of our day are marked by wilfulness and a certain flippancy and want of reverence; if this is so, and in so far as it is so, it is because children are brought up without the consciousness of their relation to the divine Authority, whom we are taught to call "Our Father." This divine name reminds us that authority is lodged in the Author of our being, and is tender, pitiful, preventive, strong to care for and wise to govern, as we see it feebly shown forth even in the best of human fathers.

But there are questions in the air about the authority of the Scriptures and what not, and we are all more or less at the mercy of words; and, because the so-called Higher Criticism finds much to question as to the verbal accuracy of passages of the Scriptures, we get a dim idea that the divine authority itself is in question. One part of the work of the Union is, no doubt, to strengthen the hands of parents by comforting them with the sense of the higher authority behind theirs and always supporting them in the exercise of the deputed powers they hold as heads of families. There is another notion in the air which tells against the recognition of authority, and that is, the greatly increased respect for individual personality and for the right of each individual to develop on the lines of his own character. But it is a mistake to suppose that the exercise of authority runs counter to any individual development that is not on morally wrong lines. The supreme authority and all deputed authority works precisely as does a good and just national government whose business it is to defend the liberties of the subject at all points, even by checking, repressing and punishing the license which interferes with the rights of others and with the true liberty of the transgressor. The law (that is the utterance of authority) is for the punishment of evil-doers, but for the praise of them that do well; and the associations of harshness, punishment, force, arbitrary dealings, with the idea of authority, human and divine, is an example of the confusion of thought to which most of our errors in conduct are traceable. It is not authority which punishes: the penalties which follow us through life, of which those in the family are a faint foretaste, are the inevitable consequences of broken law, whether moral or physical, and from which authority, strong and benign, exists to save us by prevention and, if needs be, by lesser and corrective penalties. It seems to me that lectures on the following subjects, for example, might help to focus the thought of our members on a subject of such vital importance: (1) Our relation to the Supreme authority, not a relation of choice, but as inevitable as the family relationships into which we are born; (2) The duty of loyalty and the shame of infidelity; (3) The duty of reverence; (4) The duty of docility to indications of the Divine will; (5) Scriptural revelations of God, as the Ruler of men, as saying to Abraham, "Go, and he goeth"; to Cyrus, "Do this, and he doeth it"; (6) Revelations which history affords of God as the Ruler of nations, and as the benign Ruler of men who prospers the ways of His servants; (7) How the sense of the Divine authority may be imparted in the home; (8) How reverence for holy things may be taught; (9) Suggestions as to definite Bible teaching on this head. Indeed the subject is capable of great amplification, and suggests trains of thought very important in these days.

The next point we have set ourselves to consider is the laying down of lines of *habit* in the religious life. We need not enter to-day into the physiological reasons for the compelling power of habit. Our present purpose is to consider how far this power can be employed in the religious development of a child. Let us consider the subject as it bears upon habits of thought and of attitude of life and of speech; though indeed all these are one, for every act and attitude is begotten of a thought, however unaware we be of thinking. It is said of the wicked that "God is not in all their thoughts." Of the child it should be said that God is in all his thoughts, happy-making joyous thoughts, restful and dutiful thoughts, thoughts of loving and giving and serving, the wealth of beautiful thoughts with which every child's heart overflows. We are inclined to think that a child is a little morbid and precocious when he asks questions and has imaginings about things divine, and we do our best to divert him. What he needs is to be guided into true, happy thinking; every day should bring him "new thoughts of God, new hopes of heaven." He understands things divine better than we do, because his ideas have not been shaped to a conventional standard; and thoughts of God are to him an escape into the Infinite from the worrying limitations, the perception of the prison bars, which are among the bitter pangs of childhood. To keep a child in this habit of the thought of God—so that to lose it, for even a little while, is like coming home after an absence and finding his mother out—is a very delicate part of a parent's work.

The importance of reverent attitudes is a little apt to be overlooked in these days. We are, before all things, sincere, and are afraid to insist upon "mere forms," feeling it best to leave the child to the natural expression of his own emotions. Here perhaps we are wrong, as it is just as true to say that the form gives birth to the feeling as that the feeling should give birth to the form. Children should be taught to take time, to be reverent at grace before meals, at family prayers, at their own prayers, in church, when they are old enough to attend. Perhaps some of us may remember standing daily by our mother's knee in reverent attitude to recite the Apostles' Creed, and the recollection of the reverence expressed in that early act remains with one through a life-time. "Because of the angels" should be a thought to repress unbecoming behaviour in children. It is a mistake to suppose that the forms of reverence need be tiresome to them. They love little ceremonies, and to be taught to kneel nicely while saying their short prayers would help them to a feeling of reverence in after life. In connection with children's behaviour in church, the sentiment and forms of reverence cannot be expected if they are taken to church too young or to too long services, or are expected to maintain their attention throughout. If children must be taken to long services, they should be allowed the resource of a Sunday picture-book, and told that the hymns and the "Our Father," for example, are the parts of the service for them. But in these days of bright short services, especially adapted for children, the difficulty need not arise.

The habit of regularity in children's devotions is very important. The mother cannot always be present, but I have known children far more punctual in their devotions when away from their mother, because they know it to be her wish, than if she were there to remind them. They may say, like a little friend of mine, aged four, "Mother, I always worship idols." "Do you, indeed, Margaret, when?" "Why, when I say my prayers to the chair." But it is a great thing for all of us to get the habit of "saying our prayers" at a given time and in a given place which comes to be to us as a holy place. The chair, or the bedside, or the little prayer-table, or, best of all, the mother's knee, plays no small part in framing the soul to a habit of devotion. In this connection it is worth while to remark that the evening prayers of children and of school girls and boys should not be left until the children are tired and drop asleep over their evening exercises. After tea is a very good set time for prayers, when it can be managed. The habit of hearing, and later, of reading the Bible, is one to establish at an early age. We are met with a difficulty that the Bible is, in fact, a library containing passages and, indeed, whole books which are not for the edification of children; and many parents fall back upon little collections of texts for morning and evening use. But I doubt the wisdom of this plan. We may believe that the narrative teaching of the Scriptures is far more helpful to children, anyway, than the stimulating moral and spiritual texts picked out for them in little devotional books. The two-penny single books of the Bible, published by the Bible Society, should be a resource for parents. A child old enough to take pleasure in reading for himself would greatly enjoy reading through the Gospel of St. Mark, for example, in a nice little book, as part of his morning's devotions. But while pressing the importance of habits of prayer and devotional reading, it should be remembered that children are little formalists by nature, and that they should not be encouraged in long readings or long prayers with a notion of any merit in such exercises.

Perhaps we do not attach enough importance to the habit of praise in our children's devotions. Praise and thanksgiving come freely from the young heart; gladness is natural and holy, and music is a delight. The singing of hymns at home and of the hymns and canticles in church should be a special delight, and the habit of soft and reverent singing, of offering our very best in praise, should be carefully formed. Hymns with a story, such as:—"A little ship was on the sea," "I think when I read that sweet story of old," "Hushed was the evening hymn," are perhaps the best for little children. Children should be trained in the habits of attention and real devotion during short services or parts of services. The habit of finding their places in the prayer-book and following the service is interesting and aids attention, but perhaps it would be well to tell children of even ten or eleven that during the litany, for example, they might occupy themselves by saying over silently hymns that they know.

The habit of Sunday observances, not rigid, not dull, and yet peculiar to the day, is especially important. Sunday stories, Sunday hymns, Sunday walks, Sunday talks, Sunday painting, Sunday knitting even, Sunday card-games, should all be special to the day, quiet, glad, serene. The people who clamour for a Sunday that shall be as other days little know how healing to the jaded brain is the change of thought and occupation the seventh day brings with it. There is hardly a more precious inheritance to be handed on than that of the traditional English Sunday, stripped of its austerities we hope, but keeping its character of quiet gladness and communion with Nature as well as with God. But we cannot pursue the subject further. The field of the habits of the religious life should afford many valuable lectures in our Branches; as, for example:—

The habitual thought of God in a family.

The habit of reverence in thought, attitude, act and speech.

The habit of prayer as regards time, place, manner, matter.

The habit of praise and thanksgiving.

The habits of attention and devotion during a service (or part of a service).

Aids to devout habits.

Habits of devotional reading.

The most important part of our subject remains to be considered—the inspiring ideas we propose to give children in the things of the divine life. This is a matter we are a little apt to leave to chance, but when we consider the vitalising power of an idea, and how a single great idea changes the current of a life, it becomes us to consider very carefully what ideas of the things of God we may best offer children, and how these may be most invitingly presented. It is a very sad fact that many children get their first ideas of God in the nursery, and that these are of a Being on the watch for their transgressions and always ready to chastise. It is hard to estimate the alienation which these first ideas of the Divine Father set up in the hearts of His little children.

Another danger is lest the things of the divine life should be made too familiar and hackneyed, that the name of our blessed Lord should be used without reverence, and that children should get the notion that the Lord God exists for their uses and not they for His service.

Perhaps the first vitalising idea to give children is that of the tender Fatherhood of God, that they live and move and have their being within the divine embrace. Let children grow up in this joyful assurance and, in the days to come, infidelity to this closest of all relationships will be as shameful a thing in their eyes as it was in the eyes of the Christian Church during the Age of Faith. Next, perhaps, the idea of Christ their King is fitted to touch springs of conduct and to rouse the enthusiasm of loyalty in children, who have it in them, as we all know, to bestow heroic devotion on that which they find heroic. Perhaps we do not make enough of this principle of hero-worship in human nature in our teaching of religion. We are inclined to make our religious aims subjective rather than objective. We are tempted to look upon Christianity as a scheme of salvation designed and carried out for our benefit; whereas the very essence of Christianity is passionate devotion to an altogether adorable Person.

But, recognising this, there is still a danger in these days of adopting a rose-water treatment in our dealings with children. Few grown-up people, alas, have so keen and vivid a sense of sin as a little transgressor say of six or seven. Many a naughty, passionate, or sulky and generally hardened little offender is so, simply because he does not know, with any personal knowledge, that there is a Saviour of the world, who has for him instant forgiveness and waiting love. But here again, the thoughts of a child should be turned outwards to Jesus, our Saviour, and not inward to his own thoughts and feelings towards our blessed Saviour.

One more salient truth of the Christian verity we have time to touch upon. Most Christian parents teach their children to recognise the in-dwelling of the Holy Ghost, the Comforter; the ideas expressed in,—

"Enable with perpetual light
The dulness of our blinded sight."

"Anoint and cheer our soiled face
With the abundance of Thy grace."

But it would be well if we could break down in our children's minds the wall of separation between things sacred and things so-called secular, by making them feel that all "sound learning," as well as all "religious instruction," falls within the office of God, the Holy Spirit, the supreme Educator of mankind.

Many other inspiring ideas concerning the religious life will occur to every parent, ideas of more value than any I can suggest. But I think it would be a help if, in our various Branches, we could get lectures amplifying such ideas as we have touched upon, and shewing how they may be brought before children. Lectures, for example, on any one of the several clauses of The Lord's Prayer and of The Apostles' Creed: or, again, on the clauses of that Duty towards God in the Church Catechism, which all who receive the Old and the New Testament Scriptures must accept.

I feel I have touched very inadequately, not upon all that is necessary to bring up children in "the nurture and admonition of the Lord," but on the leading principles which may be essential.

THE CHAIRMAN: I must now ask any gentleman or lady who would like to make a few remarks upon this very interesting paper to rise and speak. I should like to know the name of any lady or gentleman who may speak.

MRS. BOOLE: It is sometimes said that outsiders see most of the game. I do not think that at all; I do not think they see most, but that they see one or two things which it is easier for them to see than for the persons actually engaged. In the matter of religion I am entirely an outsider. My business is that of a specialist science teacher, to set children to work so that there shall not be a break between the elementary science they learn and the higher branches. In this capacity I have come across many cases of the collapse of religion at the very touch of high-class science. It is pure nonsense to suppose that this is because of the antagonism between science and religion. It may be in some cases that some teachers say something against religion. If parents think that they have a monopoly of regret at this collapse, they are much mistaken. It has been my business to investigate this with other teachers who regret it as much as I do.

The collapse comes, some think, because if two things are going down a stream the weaker in collision will collapse. Why should a child's faith collapse at the touch of what we say about outside phenomena, and why should his conceptions of his relations to his fellow-beings collapse at the touch of anything we have to say about the relations of the planets or the higher calculus? We are bewildered when it happens and I have taken council with many, among them clergymen of the Church of England, Positivists, etc., etc., and what they thought was that the methods of science teaching are far superior, that the children see in their science work a good standard of teaching, and because the religious teacher's method is bad they get an intellectual contempt for the religious teacher. I put that before a meeting of teachers and we came to the conclusion that we should have better methods of religious teaching. I have come to the conclusion that it is due to the fact that religious people do not understand as well as scientific people the place of authority in teaching.

The whole stability of science is due to the fact that there is a definite and well-marked place for authority. To show what I mean—in science all kinds of things are disputed, but we have a perfect consensus of opinion as to what is agreed upon and we have a definite moral authority among us that every child shall know, and have a good basis for the things about which people are agreed before he is allowed to hear anything at all about the things about which people disagree.

We do not allow anybody to teach anything to a child until the child has had a great deal of training in the simple things as to which everybody agrees. I think it would be a good thing to take this up and see how it could be transferred to religion and ethics.

There has been as much discussion as to the true nature of electricity as there has been about the real Presence in the Sacrament, but nobody tells any child of this at all. We tell them that if they rub sealing wax on a coat sleeve and then put the wax near some paper, the latter will be attracted; nobody disputes that. The child has a solid basis of experience, and knows that it coincides with the experience of its elders before anybody speaks of theories of electricity at all. If people were careful to speak in this way about religion I doubt very much whether any child would give up religion.

There have been disputes about the differential calculus and no one has tried till quite lately to teach anything about it to a child; it would make the proceeding ridiculous because, not having been settled, we could not teach it to children. Of late it seems to be quite settled, but only quite lately; it has only just begun to be admitted that we may teach the calculus method to quite little children. I give these points as an illustration that we do not begin teaching about anything that there is any dispute about.

THE CHAIRMAN: I think we must close the discussion because of the time being so completely gone. I will just ask Professor Gladstone to say a few words.

PROFESSOR GLADSTONE: I should like to make a few remarks upon the paper, but I can only express my great pleasure in both the admirable and suggestive and very full remarks of Miss Mason, and also in this exceedingly interesting point brought before us since, in reference to the methods of teaching science and religion. Both are extremely important, and I hope we shall think over it very fully, and that we may finally see the whole paper and the discussion in print. I will take up the practical point of view. We all agree that religious teaching should be given, of course, to children, but I want to plead now before you for an instant or two on behalf of the most neglected children in that respect. The most neglected children are those of the upper classes, the very ragged children and very poor children get a large amount of religious instruction, often very good, in their day schools, and very often in their Sunday schools a very great deal is brought before their minds; but if we go to the highest classes we know that there is very little attention paid to this matter. It is almost left out in their day schools, and as to any Sunday schools we know they do not attend any. Parents will say they do inculcate religion into the minds of their children, but why stop at our own. We can add neighbours' children to our own and teach them together. I could tell you of a good many people who do this. We want earnest Christian parents of cultured understanding who will bring the children into their houses and interest them in these things, and in all probability they will like to sit there and listen to the story of the love of God in Christ Jesus. I have done this in my own house for twentytwo years, and about five hundred children have passed through the class. These have become clergymen, members of all sorts of professions, members of committees, and other important work. Many of those, especially those who are qualified as Sunday school teachers, can do good in this way, and in doing so let us endeavour to teach Christianity in the same way as we should teach other subjects, that is to say, teach the things which are certain in the first instance, and only when their minds are fortified should we bring uncertain matter before children.

THE CHAIRMAN: I am sure a great many others might tell us more on this subject, which might well have been the subject for the whole morning, but I must close the discussion upon this paper, and call upon Mrs. Perrin to speak on the Natural History Club.

NATURAL HISTORY CLUB.

MRS. PERRIN read: I have been asked as an enthusiastic member of the Natural History Club to say something about the working of the Club in London. Others will tell us later about our country Branches.

Before speaking in detail of our plan of work and our resources, I should like (though I feel it is hardly necessary) to justify our existence as an important factor in the scheme laid down by the Parents' National Educational Union. First, I think no one will dissent from our objects which are mentioned on the first page of our report, viz.:—(1) To promote the systematic study of Natural History; (2) To stimulate and guide amateurs in giving Nature lessons.

But people *may* put the query, "Do we need correspondence teaching when there are so many good and cheap books to our hand, even in our own lending library?" I should like to answer emphatically, "*Yes.*" It is the very abundance of good literature that brings in the need for busy mothers (who may even in some cases be pretty well versed in the subjects themselves) to have a well thought-out systematic and graduated course of instruction sifted and placed in a form suitable for their children. On the other hand mothers may have but little or no knowledge of the subjects, and very little time in which to prepare adequately the weekly Nature lesson which they often like to give themselves. It is to these especially that Mr. Rowbotham's letters are so useful, and I think we cannot speak too highly of their worth. They come to us monthly and have in them enough matter for four Nature lessons. These letters are intended to serve only as guides to parents and teachers, to be told and not read to the little ones.

Like all good teachers, Mr. Rowbotham is most anxious that we should first draw out from the children what they themselves notice about the animal, flower, or stone under consideration, and afterwards correct, if necessary, their observations and amplify from the letters. Thus, we help the children in the first place to use their eyes, to observe and to think about what they see, and secondly to acquire some simple, but well-ordered knowledge about what they have themselves noticed.

Children are encouraged to draw what they observe whenever possible, and Mr. Rowbotham, at the conclusion of his letters, gives some hints as to the preparation work of this sort to be done by the children between the lessons.

It was thought that at the end of a two years' course, less detailed and therefore less expensive letters would suffice. Therefore, this year Mr. Rowbotham refers us to certain pages in certain books, when we can for ourselves fill in the skeleton laid down by him.

Each course of letters is now 10*s.* instead of as before 18*s.*, the subjects being: 1st, Botany; 2nd, Lessons from our Walks; 3rd, Natural History in house, garden and field. Members who join now are first advised to take in last year's letters, which they can have at the reduced rate, viz., 10*s.* each course.

The number of subscribers this year for the Botany course is 23; for Lessons from our Walks, 6; for Natural History in house, garden and field, 17. We hope before this week is over these numbers will be doubled.

We hope our country Branches will more often take in these letters as they have their unique value, even if the Branches mark out their own course of study, lectures, etc. People also who are not members of the Union we cordially invite to join us.